

**BERNARD P. CARVALHO JR.**  
Mayor



**WALLACE REZENTES JR.**  
Managing Director

COUNTY OF KAUAI

**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY**

**News Release**

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**County of Kaua'i to pursue suit to fight opioid epidemic**

LĪHU'E – The County of Kaua'i will be the first governmental body in the state of Hawai'i to pursue opioid litigation against the manufacturers, marketers, and distributors of opioid pain medications.

"Opioid abuse is a serious issue and threat to our community, and the time for action is now," said Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr. "To be clear, this is not a fight against hospitals or medical providers. We are pursuing litigation against manufacturers, marketers, and distributors of opioid pain medications who have irresponsibly spread this terrible epidemic upon our community."

On behalf of the County of Kaua'i administration with approval from the Kaua'i County Council Wednesday, the Office of the County Attorney will seek relief for civil penalties, treble damages, compensatory damages, punitive damages, and attorneys' fees and costs. The amount of relief is undisclosed at this time, and will be proven at trial.

Statistics have shown that prescription opioid abuse is a major problem and it leads to heroin abuse. Prescription opioid abuse precedes heroin use by an average of two years. In 2015, over 300 million prescriptions were written for opioid medication. Increased heroin use has been felt at the county level, as the Kaua'i Police Department seized a total of 526.2 grams of black tar heroin in 2017 and 568.8 grams this year. From 1999 to 2013, opioids have claimed

about 175,000 lives, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.

Claims that the County of Kaua'i plan to pursue include:

- Violations of Consumer Protection Act/Fair Business Practices;
- Violations of State Controlled Substances Act;
- Falsely and fraudulently marketing opioids pain medications as safe and non-addictive;
- Generally, creating a false perception of the safety and efficacy of opioids in the medical community;
- Defendants' conduct in failing to report suspicious orders as required by law;
- Defendants' conduct in dispensing, supplying and/or selling prescription opioids without adequate safeguards to prevent diversion.

"The ill effects of opioids have been strongly felt in our community, and now is the time to act," said County Attorney Mauna Kea Trask. "It is our responsibility to hold manufacturers, marketers, and distributors accountable for the opioid epidemic that has caused great pain to many of our families and friends."

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